

Goals

Goals provide students a set of personal standards by which they can judge the outcomes of their learning attempts. These standards also have the effect of motivating and encouraging students during their learning as they are able to more accurately gauge the progress of their understandings (Bandura, 1986).

Performance Goals: Performance goals refer to goals set with a focus on the **outcomes** of educational efforts (Hagen & Weinstein, 1995). Examples of performance goals in mathematics may include desired course grades, homework scores, and exam scores.

Mastery Goals: Mastery goals refer to goals set with a focus on the learning or mastery of concepts (Hagen & Weinstein, 1995). Goals of mastery are goals for certain **levels of understanding** in specific mathematical concepts or comfort in applying new mathematical procedures to real life situations.

A mastery goal has the effect of prompting students to seek challenges instead of avoiding them and motivates them to put forth more effort into their learning (Hagen & Weinstein, 1995). Also, the evaluation of a student's progress towards completing mastery goals is not dependent on the assessment of homework and examinations. These types of goals empower students to accurately self-monitor their progress towards their goals and this monitoring is not dependent on the evaluation of someone else (i.e. - the instructor), as is the case with performance goals.

Characteristics of effective goals

Measurable – To be prepared to accurately evaluate one's progress, goals must have a sense of measure to them. Example "I will feel comfortable with and understand each type of problem presented in section 2.5" or "I will be able to complete any type of fraction problem whether it is addition/subtraction or multiplication/division."

Proximal – Long-term and short-term goals are both important but proximal (short-term) goals offer themselves to evaluation more easily and therefore are more motivating.

Specific – This aids with a goal being measurable. Specific goals provide very strict direction to your education.

Realistic – If you can't reach a goal that you set for yourself you will begin to view your goals as unattainable references and therefore sapping the usefulness of setting goals in the first place.

Sources

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Hagen, A. S., & Weinstein, C. E. (1995). Achievement goals, self-regulated learning, and the role of classroom context. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 63, 43-55.